

Hate speech dominates social media platform when users want answers on terrorism

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People often resort to using hate speech when searching about terrorism on a community social media platform, a study has found. Community question answering sites (CQAs) are social media platforms where users ask questions, answer those submitted by others, and have the option to evaluate responses.

Previous studies have mainly looked at terrorism-related data drawn from Facebook and Twitter, this was the first to examine trends on the CQA site, Yahoo! Answers.

The University of York study explored the use of Yahoo! Answers on

the topic of terrorism and looked at a dataset of 300 questions that attracted more than 2,000 answers.

The questions reflected the community's information needs, ranging from the life of extremists to counter-terrorism policies. Sensitive questions outnumbered innocuous ones.

A typical innocuous question was: Who exactly created ISIS?, while a more sensitive question was: Do you agree with Donald Trump that we should ban Muslims coming from countries seized by ISIS, Al Qaeda and other terrorists?

Author, Dr. Snehasish Banerjee, lecturer at the York Management School, University of York, said: "It seems that people are really curious to know about terrorists, what terrorists think, their ideas etc.

"While portrayed as a threat to society and human civilization by mainstream media, terrorists sell terrorism as freedom fighting via social networking sites and private messaging platforms

However, the actual workings of terrorism are largely shrouded in secrecy. For the curious, a convenient avenue to turn to is the community question answering sites."

Sensitive questions were significantly more likely to be submitted anonymously than innocuous ones, the study found.

While no [significant difference](#) arose with respect to answers, the paper found that identities were seldom recognisable. Using names non-traceable to themselves, CQA users become embolden to use provocative, inflammatory or uncivil language.

Dr. Banerjee added: "We found that answers were laden with [negative](#)

[emotions](#) reflecting [hate speech](#) and Islamophobia, making claims that were rarely verifiable.

"Users who posted sensitive questions and answers generally tended to remain anonymous.

"This paper calls for governments and [law enforcement agencies](#) to collaborate with major social media companies, including CQAs, to develop a process for cross-platform blacklisting of users and content, as well as identifying those who are vulnerable."

More information: Alton Y.K. Chua et al, The topic of terrorism on Yahoo! Answers: questions, answers and users' anonymity, *Aslib Journal of Information Management* (2020). [DOI: 10.1108/AJIM-08-2019-0204](https://doi.org/10.1108/AJIM-08-2019-0204)

Provided by University of York

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